

# Moving the Homeless Home

## Conditioning Funding on Collaboration

CONTINUUM OF CARE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING  
AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

In order to encourage communities to take a more long-term and comprehensive approach to the problem of homelessness, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has since 1993 been requiring comprehensive community plans as a condition of homeless services funding.

Known as the Continuum of Care, the program attempts to shift the focus of homeless programs away from crisis management—single facilities providing a bed and meal for a night—to helping clients get off the streets permanently through a system of outreach, shelter, affordable housing and ongoing support services. The key to the Continuum of Care is its requirement that communities applying for HUD homeless services funds first

develop broad-based plans with the involvement of local service providers, citizens, advocates, public officials, and homeless and formerly homeless people. Those plans must demonstrate a coordinated, community-wide approach to the long-range goal of helping homeless individuals and families become independent.

The Continuum of Care began as a pilot program in 1993. In 1995,

HUD extended the requirement to all communities applying for homeless services funding. By 1998 consortia were established in nearly 650 cities, 2,000 counties and two territories.

While there was initially some resistance within the homeless services community to the new way of



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doing business, the approach has clearly caught on. In Detroit, the city and its homeless services providers formed the Homeless Action Network. In New Orleans, a nonprofit called UNITY was created to coordinate homeless services citywide. In Southern California, nearly 40 cities and counties, including the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County, have developed a single consortium, pulling together a huge network of shelters, services and housing to focus on moving people from the streets to independence.

HUD officials estimate that under the Continuum of Care, homeless services have moved more than 400,000 homeless persons into permanent housing, while providing immediate shelter for approximately 500,000 people this year. "I lived in cars and on the street," says Juanita Price, a mother and now a junior at Howard University in Washington, D.C. "This program offered the range of services I needed to get an apartment, a job and even get back into school."

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